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SUBJECT: CHALABI SERVICE COMMITTEE REVIEWS PROGRESS

Ref: #3833, #3793, #3708, #3565, #3259

¶1. SUMMARY: Pausing to review previously adopted recommendations, the Services Committee dedicated nearly two hours of discussion at its December 4 meeting to that end. The Ministries of Trade, Oil, Defense, Health and Electricity presented, as did the Amanat and a council representative from Sabi' Al Bor. FAQ spokesperson and a Ministry of Finance representative also attended. No representative from the Baghdad Operations Command was in attendance. END SUMMARY.

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Electricity & Health Recommendations Review
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¶2. Committee Chairman, Dr. Ahmed Chalabi commended the Ministry of Electricity (MoE) for fulfilling the November 20 commitment to provide 72 continuous hours of power weekly to the Kahdimiyah irrigation pumps. This prevents farmers from having to use drinking water to irrigate their crops. Five other electricity recommendations remain incomplete. We have reported these recommendations in previous cables.

¶3. There are currently eight health related recommendations. The most recent was tasked this week - instructing the Ministry of Health (MoH) to rehabilitate the Mahmoudiya hospital and its satellite health centers, in addition to meeting the medical staff and equipment shortages and prescription drug shortages of those facilities.

¶4. In reviewing the November 6 decision to transfer the Al Karkh Hospital from the MoH to the Ministry of Defense (MoD), the ministries disagreed on the level of progress to date. The appointed subcommittee is still working out details. The Health IG reported that 7 doctors have been sent to the Baghdad suburb of Sabi' al Bor. He also said he plans to open an emergency center in the area although this recommendation was not among the promises he made to the people of Sabi' Al Bor nor a committee recommendation. The IG reported that an effort to expediently purchase life saving medications has been presented to the Prime Minister for his approval. An October 25 recommendation to increase doctor pay is held up at the Ministry of Finance (MoF) according to the IG. Dr. Chalabi intends to send a letter to the MoF to urge its cooperation for this funding and to remind them of their obligation to the Services Committee. Finally, ITAO Director Tokola reported that the Nahrawan PHC opened to patients on November 24- completing a November 20 request.

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Revisiting Fuel Issues
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¶5. Mr. Mo'tasim Akram from the Ministry of Oil presented again about fuel issues. Two problems plague cooking gas: a general shortage of benzene and a corrupt distribution channel. The representative also suggested that the MoO cease selling gasoline and instead auction it off to the international market to eliminate corruption and administrative bottlenecks. The rep noted the ministries hesitancy to completely open Iraq to the international community for fear they

can sell cheaper fuel products. He also maintained that the MoO should not be responsible for the distribution of product. (Comment: Deputy Minister Mo'tasim Akram's views do not always represent those of the ministry. End Comment)

¶6. Mr. Mo'tasim Akram presented a detailed report on the Al-Karkh Depot. The loading bridge of Al-Karkh was attacked on February 2. Four gasoline points and the roof were destroyed, but have since been rehabilitated by the depot's staff. According to the MoO representative, the loading bridge has been operational since the end of February. At the new Al-Latifiyyah depot, there are 25 tanks, 21 of which are useable. Four are out of service due to fires. However, on November 16 a fire broke out at this depot and destroyed the high voltage system and pump units, including valve and pipe attachments. As a result, the depot is inoperable. Dr. Chalabi ordered the MoO to investigate the cause/s of the fire and work expeditiously to rehabilitate the depot. In the meantime, though, the MoO rehabilitated Al-Latifiyyah old depot. It has been loading trucks since the end of November. There are four tanks at this older depot; three capable of storing 10000 m3 of kerosene, gasoline and gasoline oil. A fourth tank is available for gasoline oil and can store 5000 m3.

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Ministry of Commerce Talks PDS Again
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¶7. Mentioning shortages in baby and adult milk as well as cooking oil, the Deputy Minister of Trade (MoTrade), Mrs. Sawaybah Mahmoud Zakanah, spent more time discussing funding needs. The ministry is seeking additional funds in 2008 because imported items continue to increase in price. The representative from the Ministry of Finance asked that the MoTrade consider eliminating certain food ration items and reduce quantities where possible. (Note: Scaling back benefits to the PDS program have been mentioned several times at

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this committee, but also at the Friday, I-ESC by the Prime Minister himself. End Note)

¶8. A discussion about funding for INIC, the national ID card, followed. The MoTrade requested a \$10m allocation to launch a hi-tech ID card project. The Ministry of Finance offered to fund it by transferring money from an unexecuted project. Mrs. Sawaybah was vehemently opposed to this. Dr. Chalabi suggested that the Ministry of Planning and Development Cooperation (MoPDC) be contacted to see if the investment budget had funds that could be dedicated to this end.

Comment

¶9. By our counts, the committee has made around 15 decisions; 2 health related recommendations, 5 electricity recommendations, 3 sewer, 1 trash, 1 security and 1 traffic recommendation or decision. The committee also passed a recommendation to create emergency service centers in the Russafa and Karkh districts on November 13. There are approximately 27 other suggestions and requests, not to mention the tasks associated with the field trips and the visits from the qada local officials. Many of those were not discussed at this meeting.

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